

# HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEETING

## *Minutes*

December 15, 2016

### Commission Members Present:

Bianca Chang  
Joan Hash  
Reverend Turner  
Ilene Kessler  
Shiraz Ahmed  
Opel T. Jones, I  
Ivette Lopez  
Misbah Farooqi

### Commission Members Absent:

Frank V. Eastham  
Peter Hwang

### Staff:

Dr. Barbara J. Sands, HRC Executive Secretary  
Farheen Sheik, Acting HRC Recording Secretary

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m.

#### 2. PUBLIC FORUM – N/A

#### 3. HRC CASES UPDATE – LEGAL COUNSEL – N/A

#### 4. APPROVE MINUTES

November meeting minutes approved.

#### 5. CHAIR'S REPORT – Reverend Turner thanked members for allowing him to serve as Chair for 2016.

- Council Resolution 180 – Reverend Turner gave testimony supporting this resolution on 12/5 for HRC to conduct a study of hiring, recruitment, and retention of Howard County government, HCPD, Fire & Rescue, and HCPSS. Commissioners discussed study, brain-stormed, discussed possible options, and created a sub-committee for this initiative. Sub-committee Commission members are: Ivette, Opel, Reverend Turner. Dr. Sands will share information with Reverend Turner as she receives it. Sub-committee will draft requirements, and report back to all members in January. April 2017 is 1<sup>st</sup> briefing of report to the County Council. Motion was made for Commission to select outside vendor to conduct study.
- Reverend Turner drafted a "Letter to the Editor" regarding a recent assignment given to high school students to write a slave song with the final comment to "have fun with it and entertain us all." Commissioners reviewed the letter for approval of it being sent on behalf of the HRC.
- Howard County citizens, community leaders, Howard County school parents, and students attended an open community forum to discuss several recent incidents on social media, etc. Citizens expressed their opinions, frustrations, concerns, and asked questions. Commissioners Ilene, Reverend Turner, Joan, Frank and Student Commissioner Misbah were all in attendance. Dr. Sands also participated in this initiative spear-headed by the County Executive's Office.
- Congressman Cummings planning an event on 12/20 regarding "One Howard." See flier for more information.
- Elections were held for 2017 Chair and Vice Chair. Members voted for Reverend Turner as Chair for 2017, and Shiraz as Vice Chair.

#### 5. COMMITTEES/ REPORTS

- Finance & Fair Lending with Housing – *Ilene, Ivette, Joan* - No report
- Legislation – *Ivette* – Ivette shared her report, in addition to Reverend Turner's report regarding CR-180.
- Education, Public Safety and Student Life Committee – *Frank, Reverend Turner, Opel, Ivette* – Chief McMahon hired as new Howard County Sherriff. Reverend Turner requested Dr. Sands to contact/invite Sherriff McMahon to attend the March meeting.
- HRC Awards Committee – *Bianca & Opel* – Please consider nominating an individual or organization. Additionally, please spread the word through your professional and faith-based organizations that nominations are now being accepted and can be completed online by going to the county's website, under the OHR Department webpage.
- Human Trafficking Committee – Peter, Shiraz and Joan – 48 KITS were donated from several churches in Western Howard County. Commissioners also brought KITS to donate as an end of year service project. Per Dr. Sands, Human Trafficking will fall under Community Action Agency, and will be funded in 2017. Additionally, the National Anti-Human Trafficking conference is scheduled for 2018. More information will follow.

- LGBTQ Committee – *Opel* – No report.
- Aging, Disability and Health Care Committee – *Bianca* – Hard copy of report submitted.
- HRC Goals Committee – Peter, Bianca, Rev. Turner – committee members requested a meeting with David Lee in January to discuss how the County can resource HRC's efforts to have a more interactive website, and utilize technology to educate and engage the community regarding human rights issues. Date, time, etc will be confirmed.
- Ad-Hoc Committee/Nominating Committee – Shiraz, Peter, Joan – Interviews for HRC open seats being scheduled.

6. STUDENT REPORT – students at Wilde Lake held student conversation meetings to discuss recent incidents on social media. Wilde Lake students drafted a list of ideas on maintaining and enhancing an inclusive community for all students. Dr. Ball spoke to students to hear their ideas, offer suggestions, and encouragement. A student leadership conference with students from throughout the county is being considered, writing a school mission statement and/or school constitution, etc. Students at Oakland Mills High School conducted a well-planned student walk-out to show solidarity for students of all races, religions and backgrounds. Misbah has been in touch with several SGA Presidents to possibly host a county-wide program or event.

7. STAFF REPORT/UPDATES – Please see written report from Dr. Sands, along with number of OHR cases, etc. Advertisement for Investigator position closed, candidate selected. Target date for new employee to start 2<sup>nd</sup> week of January. Please see information about upcoming play “Disgrace” for discussion at January meeting. Discussion held on county code, 12.202 IX.C. MLK Commission Holiday Celebration on 1/15, 2 p.m. reception, 3 p.m. program at Long Reach High School.

9. NEW BUSINESS – N/A

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES – Per Opel, Annual Alpha Breakfast at Martin’s West on 1/8/17. Please contact Opel directly if you’re interested. Opel requested ¼ ad for program booklet. Dr. Sands approved.

II. ADJOURNMENT – Meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.